

South Africa raises citrus export forecast to 188.2m cartons

The Citrus Growers' Association of Southern Africa (CGA) has revised its export projection for the current season to 188.2 million 15kg cartons, up 10% from the initial forecast of 171 million cartons. The increase follows the latest Variety Focus Group meetings and is driven by higher overseas demand for processing-grade juicing oranges and juicing lemons, favourable weather conditions, and improved production efficiencies. Stronger demand in the Northern Hemisphere early in the season also advanced lemon and orange shipments.

CGA Chief Executive Officer Dr Boitshoko Ntshabele said Valencia orange figures align with the five-year average and fit within the association's long-term growth strategy. "Volumes alone are, of course, just one metric with which to gauge an industry. Apart from trade turmoil, rising input costs, and the EU's continued unscientific and unfair plant health trade barriers are also impacting our growers. With the projection of 188.2 million cartons for 2025, our industry is on course to achieve our targets. But for jobs to be created out of these volumes, the new citrus must find markets. Therefore, market retention and expansion are essential," he said.

Navel orange exports are now projected at 29.6 million cartons, 11% higher than the initial 26.1 million. Valencia oranges are expected to reach 54.5 million cartons, up 4% from the original 52 million. The Navel season has peaked, while Valencia packing is ongoing and will slow from late August into mid-September.

Mandarin projections have increased by 9%, from 44.9 million to 49.3 million cartons, with late varieties currently being packed. The lemon forecast has been raised to 39.6 million cartons, supported by a larger third lemon set and steady market demand. Grapefruit exports are nearly complete, with final volumes estimated at 15 million cartons, slightly below the original 15.3 million estimate.

Dr Ntshabele advised growers and exporters to align shipments with market needs. "The quality of the fruit is great. The whole season has been about two weeks earlier than in 2024, allowing for a smooth transition back to Northern hemisphere supply," he said.

CGA Chief Operating Officer Paul Hardman noted that ports have operated more efficiently in 2025 due to added equipment and new management strategies, allowing for earlier shipments. However, with the larger crop, he stressed the need to keep fruit moving quickly over the coming weeks.

Regarding the 30% US tariff on South African citrus effective 7 August, Dr Ntshabele said accelerated shipments ahead of the deadline reduced its impact this season. "But should a mutually beneficial trade deal not be concluded, our next export season will unfortunately feel the full effect of the tariff," he said.

For more information:

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